



**Opening Remarks of
Mr. Vladimir Voronkov
Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism**

Briefing for Permanent Missions on project implementation

**Project on Promoting Universalization and Effective Implementation of the International
Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism**

24 February 2021

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this briefing on the implementation of the European Union and the United Nations joint project on the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT).

The United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT) of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), partnered to implement this global project, demonstrating our commitment to an “All-of-UN” approach to combatting terrorism.

This project is also a testament to the commitment of the European Union to counter the threat of nuclear terrorism, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the EU as our donor and partner in this endeavor.

Several UN entities and international organizations with whom we have been working closely for this project are here with us today, namely: the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly, INTERPOL, the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, UNODC, and the Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN General Assembly adopted ICSANT by consensus in 2005. It entered into force in 2007 and currently has 117 Parties.

As a legally binding instrument, the Convention obliges State Parties to extradite or prosecute alleged offenders and calls for cooperation among State Parties in preventing terrorist attacks by sharing information and assisting each other with criminal investigations and extradition.

The risk of terrorists gaining access to and using nuclear and radiological materials is a significant threat to humanity and international peace and security.

In its Incident and Trafficking Database, the International Atomic Energy Agency, lists well over 3000 incidents which Member States reported from 1993 through 2020 related to illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive materials.

Of these, 290 involved a confirmed or likely act of trafficking and a further 1,023 did not have sufficient information to determine if it was related to trafficking or not.

These are very worrying figures.

In light of increasingly strong linkages between organized crime and terrorism, nuclear and radiological materials trafficked by criminal groups could easily end up in the hands of terrorists.

To counter this threat, our ICSANT project seeks to support State Parties in their efforts to strengthen their legal frameworks and enhance their nuclear security.

I would like to sincerely thank the permanent missions in New York that have helped us engage many stakeholders in their capitals, which have so far very actively participated in the project.

The objective of today's meeting is to take stock of the progress achieved so far and share with you information about the project's upcoming events and how your countries could benefit from them.

Since the project was launched in April 2019, we have been working on awareness raising activities—including high-level meetings and national advocacy events with legislative bodies and policy-makers—, preparing an academic study on reasons and challenges for Member States not becoming parties to ICSANT, and capacity building workshops to enhance nuclear security.

Let me mention a few examples of the project's activities:

In December 2019, UNCCT joined forces with Morocco and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), chaired by the Russian Federation and the United States, to organize the first technical regional workshop on nuclear security at borders, with a special focus on the Middle East and North Africa.

Similarly, in November 2020, we organized a virtual workshop on enhancing nuclear security at borders for South East Asia.

Today you will also hear about the innovative solutions developed by UNCCT, UNODC and participating Member States to continue with the timely implementation of the project despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tomorrow's 'hybrid' National Advocacy event hosted by the Republic of Tajikistan for Tajik parliamentarians and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, is an example of such solutions.

In the course of this briefing my colleagues will give you more details on this event which will take place partly in-person and partly virtually.

Additionally, representatives of the international organizations I mentioned before will address the importance of the Convention, the process of joining it, its complementarity with the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material and its Amendment, as well as the risk of nuclear terrorism.

And lastly, you will learn about the ongoing global academic study on the reasons and challenges explaining why UN Members States are not becoming party to ICSANT, which is being conducted by VERTIC on behalf of UNCCT.

I strongly encourage you to participate in this study for which my Office will be reaching out soon to transmit a brief questionnaire.

I hope that you will find today's briefing informative and useful and that it will inspire you to reach out to our Offices to explore possible support.

While much work lies ahead, I am confident that the continued implementation of the project will contribute to multilateral efforts to have a more secure and prosperous world safe from nuclear terrorism.

Thank you very much.